

REMARKS

Claim Rejections

Claims 1-3, 10-14 (claims 6-9 have been cancelled), 16-21, and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by United States Patent Application Publication No. US2002/0034977A1 (Burns et al.).

Claim 4 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as unpatentable over Burns et al. and U.S. Patent No. 5, 505,461 (Bell et al.).

Claims 5 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Burns et al.

Claims 15 and 22 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Burns et al. and U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US2003/0078094A1 (Gatto et al.).

Claim Amendments

Claims 1-5 and 10-24 have been further amended to distinguish over the cited references.

Applicants' Invention

Applicants' invention, in one configuration, is directed to a service center coupled to a gaming network and to an automatic teller network. The service center includes a player identifier structured to validate a user as an authorized holder of a player account on the gaming network. The service center further includes a ticket reader and a verifier coupled to the player identifier and the ticket reader. The verifier is structured to validate a ticket of an authorized holder that is inserted into the ticket reader. The service center also includes a payment dispenser structured to eject from the service center an amount of value only if the ticket of an authorized holder is validated.

Applicants' invention, in another configuration, is directed to a method of servicing a player account at a service center coupled to a gaming network on which a plurality of player accounts are stored. The method comprises establishing a connection to the gaming network and accepting an identification of the user. Information from the identification is compared to user data stored on the gaming network. The user is authorized when the information matches the stored user data. A ticket is accepted from the user. Data from the ticket is compared to ticket data stored on the gaming network. Something of value is provided to the user if the data from the ticket matches the stored ticket data. A data connection to an ATM network is established, and money is transferred via the data connection from an account on the ATM network to the player account of the authorized user.

The Cited Art

Burns et al.

Burns et al. is directed to a coinless gaming system 10. The system includes a host central processing unit (CPU) 100 and a series of gaming machines 200. The play of a gaming machine is controlled by internal software 202 in the gaming machine. (§ 38). A gaming machine may generate cash-out slips. (§ 44). A gaming machine may accept paper currency, free play coupons, and cash-out slips. (§43). A cash-out slip from one machine may be accepted by another machine. (§45).

The gaming machines include a paper currency reader 204 for detecting the validity and value of currency. (§ 39). The gaming machines also include a bar code reader 206 for reading a bar code on a ticket. (§41). In one embodiment, a bar code printer 208 is used to print bar codes on cash-out slips. The CPU 100 generates the bar code which represents the monetary value of the credit stored in a particular gaming machine along with a randomly generated number to permit the CPU 100 to verify the validity and unique identification of the cash-out slip. This is necessary since the cash-out slip generated by a bar code printer of one machine is capable of being inserted into a bar code reader of another machine. (§45). Thus, the machines do not need to use coins. (§11).

The gaming machines may also include a player identification reader 210. A reader 210 is capable of reading a room key or a specially encoded identification card for identifying a player using a gaming machine. The identification card permits the CPU 100 to keep track of a player and the amount of time played by the identified player. The identification card is not intended to provide the player with credit so the concern over the security of the card is not significant. (§47). Once a player has inserted an identification card into a gaming machine, that player can then be tracked by the insertion of any cash-out slip generated by the gaming machine for that player. The player would not have to insert the identification card into a gaming machine as long as the player has the cash-out slip. (§19). The reader 210 input may also be a keypad which a player would use to enter a number or some other means of identification. (§48).

The gaming system 10 also includes one or more change stations 300 or ATMs 500. (§49). The change stations include a second paper currency reader 302, a second bar code reader 304, and a second bar code printer 306. The second currency reader, the second bar code reader, and the second bar code printer are the same as used in the gaming machines. The change stations also include a currency dispenser 308 so that when a cash-out slip is inserted into the bar code reader 306, paper currency and coins can be dispensed directly to the user. (§50).

Gatto et al.

Gatto et al. is directed to a cashless gaming system 700 in a local area network 704. The network includes gaming machines 600 and ATMs 500. The network is controlled by a server 702. (§39).

In operation, an ATM 500 prints a coded ticket 100 that bears at least both a human readable verification code 106 and a machine-readable code 108. The coded ticket is dispensed to a player. The player then can take the coded ticket to a gaming machine and use it to initiate game play. If the player decides not to play the gaming machine, he may present the printed coded ticket back to the ATM and obtain his money back. (§41).

Applicants' Invention is neither Anticipated nor would it Have Been Obvious

Burns et al. does not disclose each and every feature of Applicants' claimed invention as set forth in the amended claims. Thus, Applicants' invention is not anticipated by Burns et al.

Burns et al., for instance, as called for by amended claim 1, does not disclose a service center having a player identifier structured to validate a user as an authorized holder of a player account, a verifier coupled to the player identifier and structured to validate a ticket of an authorized holder that is inserted into a ticket reader, and a payment dispenser structured to eject from the service center an amount of value only if the ticket of an authorized holder is validated.

In Burns, the reader 210 is used as part of a player tracking system to keep track of the player and the amount of time or money played by the player. The player tracking system is separate from the cashless system. The cash-out slips of Burns et al. used in the cashless system include a bar code used to determine a value of the credit associated with the cash-out slip. The bar code along with a randomly generated number allow the validity and the identity of the cash-out slip to be determined.

The Burns et al. system, however, does not require the bearer of the cash-out slip to be an authorized holder of a player account such that something of value is provided to the bearer only if the ticket of an authorized holder is validated. Any user, whether authorized or not, may receive value for a cash-out slip if it has not previously been paid. Also, any user may redeem a cash-out slip that has previously been associated with an identified player so long as the cash-out slip has not been paid.

Further, the subject matter of claims 15 and 21 would not have been obvious in view of the combination of Burns et al. and Gatto et al.

Amended claim 21, for instance, is directed to a method of serving a player account in which money is transferred via a data connection from an account on an ATM network to a player account of an authorized user. Burns et al. and Gatto et al. do not disclose such a system.

Instead, in Gatto et al., the ATM 500 dispenses a coded ticket to a player. The player must then take the coded ticket to a gaming machine and insert it in the gaming machine in order to play the gaming machine. An account value is not transferred via an online data connection from an account on an ATM network to a player account. Burns et al. is similar, as an ATM dispenses coupons to a player usable with a gaming machine.

Therefore, it is submitted that Applicants' claimed invention is not anticipated by Burns et al., nor would it have been obvious in view of Burns et al., either alone or in combination with other references.

Conclusion


In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that all the claims are now in condition for allowance. Accordingly, allowance of the claims at the earliest possible date is requested.

If prosecution of this application can be assisted by telephone, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' undersigned attorney at (510) 663-1100.

If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this amendment (including any fees due for an extension of time), such fees may be charged to Deposit Account No. 500388 (Order No. IGT1P327).

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Respectfully submitted,
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